

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL ASWAN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 056647

EXDIS TOSEC 463

FOLLOWING REPEAT MADRID 1722 ACTION SECSTATE 13 MARCH.

QUOTE

S E C R E T MADRID 1722

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SP

SUBJ: PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS-CONVERSATION WITH
FRANCO

1. I PRESENTED MY CREDENTIALS TO CHIEF OF STATE FRANCO
SHORTLY AFTER NOON TODAY IN THE USUAL ELABORATE CEREMONY.
IN THE PRESENTATION CEREMONY ITSELF, FRANCO SEEMED ALERT,
STOOD STEADILY AND HAD A FIRM HANDSHAKE. HE ALSO SHOOK
HANDS WITH EACH MEMBER OF MY STAFF WHO ACCOMPANIED ME,
AND THEN WALKED STEADILY AND WITHOUT ANY HINT OF DIFFI-
CULTY THE SHORT DISTANCE BETWEEN THE ROOM WHERE I HAD
PRESENTED MY CREDENTIALS AND THE SMALL ADJOINING ROOM
WHERE HE AND I AND FOREIGN MINISTER CORTINA CONVERSED
FOR ABOUT 15 MINUTES. I MIGHT ADD THAT PRECEDING MY
PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS, FRANCO HAD RECEIVED CRE-

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DENTIALS FROM BOTH THE AUSTRIAN AND BRAZILIAN AMBASSA-

DORS AND HAD LONGISH CONVERSATIONS WITH EACH OF THEM.

2. DURING OUR CONVERSATION, FRANCO WAS ALERT, CORDIAL, RESPONSIVE, AND CLEAR OF VOICE. AS HE IS KNOWN TO BE SUFFERING FROM PARKINSON'S, THE CONSTANT SHAKING OF HIS TWO HANDS CAME AS NO SURPRISE. HIS EYE-LIDS ALSO CONSTANTLY BLINKED, BUT ASIDE FROM THESE MANIFESTATIONS, AND GIVEN THE FACT THAT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HAD SEEN HIM, HE LOOKED REMARKABLY FIT FOR A MAN OF HIS AGE.

3. I SPOKE SOME SPANISH WITH FRANCO, BUT MOST OF THE CONVERSATION WAS CONDUCTED IN FRENCH WITH CORTINA SERVING AS INTERPRETER. I BEGAN BY EXTENDING THE PRESIDENT'S GREETINGS AND BEST WISHES AND SAID THAT WHEN I HAD SEEN THE PRESIDENT, HE HAD EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHES TO OUR RELATIONS WITH SPAIN AND TO OUR COOPERATIVE EFFORTS IN WESTERN DEFENSE. I SAID THAT WE CONSIDERED SUCH COOPERATIVE EFFORTS TO BE NOT ONLY IN THE INTEREST OF BOTH OUR COUNTRIES, BUT OF THE WEST AS A WHOLE. I SAID IT WAS MY HOPE THAT I COULD CONTRIBUTE TO ENHANCING AND PROMOTING RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. FRANCO WELCOMED ME CORDIALLY TO SPAIN AND SAID THAT SPAIN, INDEED, WAS A GOOD FRIEND OF THE UNITED STATES. SPAIN REMEMBERED WHAT THE UNITED STATES HAD DONE FOR ALL OF EUROPE, AND HE AGREED WITH MY ASSERTION THAT UNFORTUNATELY NOT ALL WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAD SUCH A RECOLLECTION.

4. THE CONVERSATION THEN TURNED TO THE QUESTION OF PORTUGAL. I SAID THAT THE ASSISTANCE WHICH WE WERE GIVING TO PORTUGAL WAS DESIGNED TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE THOSE MODERATE ELEMENTS, BUT IF, INDEED, PORTUGAL MADE A DEFINITIVE TURN TOWARD THE LEFT, I WAS CERTAIN THAT WE WOULD GIVE NO AID WHICH COULD HELP THE COMMUNISTS OR THE LEFTISTS WHO WERE ADVERSARIES COMMON TO BOTH SPAIN AND THE UNITED STATES. FRANCO SAID IT WAS QUITE CLEAR THAT THE LEFTIST ELEMENTS IN THE GOVT AND THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT HAD ACCURATE INFORMATION ON THE PLANS OF THOSE WHO MADE THE COUP ATTEMPT SEVERAL DAYS AGO. HE WAS PERSUADED THAT NO PURPOSE WOULD BE SERVED WHATSOEVER IN
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SPAIN INTERVENING IN ANY WAY IN PORTUGUESE EVENTS. ANY SECRET WHICH WENT BEYOND ONE PERSON WAS NO LONGER A SECRET, AND HE MADE QUITE CLEAR THAT SPAIN WOULD KEEP HANDS OFF. AT THE SAME TIME, HE SAID THAT THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE AS A WHOLE WERE DISTRUSTFUL OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING AS A RESULT OF THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION AND WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO ACCEPT THE DEFORMATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT INTO A COMMUNIST TYRANNY. THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE WERE VERY MUCH

LIKE HIS FELLOW GALICIANS WHO WERE SUSPECIOUS, PRUDENT AND BASICALLY CONSERVATIVE. HE RECOUNTED THAT DURING THE CIVIL WAR AS THE NATIONALISTS CHANGED THE COINAGE FROM THAT EMPLOYED UNDER THE REPUBLIC, THE GALICIANS AT FIRST ONLY CHANGED HALF OF THEIR REPUBLICAN CURRENCY, KEEPING THE OTHER HALF TO SEE HOW THE SITUATION WOULD GO. WITH EACH NATIONALIST VICTORY, THEY WOULD CHANGE MORE OF THEIR REPUBLICAN CURRENCY FOR NATIONALIST CURRENCY. THUS, HE BELIEVED THERE WAS STILL HOPE IN THE PORTUGUESE SITUATION IN THAT THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE COULD NOT BE EASILY INDUCED TO ACCEPT SOMETHING THAT BASICALLY THEY DID NOT WANT.

5. I THEN COMMENTED THAT I HOPED TO KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT, WITH MINISTER CORTINA IN PARTICULAR, REGARDING PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENTS AND ON THE WHOLE RANGE OF MATTERS OF INTEREST TO BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND SPAIN. FRANCO CONCLUDED OUR CONVERSATION BY WISHING ME WELL IN MY MISSION. AFTER A FINAL HANDSHAKE, I DEPARTED.
STABLER UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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